

BRITTANY CASE STUDY

Five Year Old, Down Syndrome Drops to the floor, seeks attention, takes food

Step One - Beginning the Activity:

Read Brittany's description below silently to yourself

Brittany is a five-year-old student with severe disabilities affecting all areas of development. She has very few words and those are not intelligible. She has no method of communicating her wants and needs except through her behavior. She recognizes large colored photos of familiar objects and people and can become very excited about favorite people and things. Her speech/language pathologist states she



Fictitious picture

has two to two and ½ year old receptive language skills, and her psychologist concurs. Her class is run by county programs but is housed on a local elementary school campus. It is composed of 10 students with mental retardation ranging from kindergarten to third grade age. Two students have one to one aides so there are four adults, and sometimes DIS staff present in the room (Speech and Language Specialist, Adaptive P.E., Occupational Therapist). Most curriculum is delivered individually, though circle and snack time are group activities.

Brittany has Down Syndrome (Trisomy 21) and was born at five months gestation. Her physician has explained that complications from her prematurity have resulted in Brittany functioning at a lower level than most children with Down Syndrome. Her father's whereabouts are unknown. Her mother has no extended family support and she also has one younger and two older children to care for. She wants the best for Brittany but is overwhelmed with the demands of taking care of her children, especially Brittany, with very limited financial resources or emotional support. Brittany's overall health is good and she is not on medication. Her vision and hearing are adequate.

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Step Two - Getting Started: Behavioral Momentum!

1. Be ready to play your part.
2. Do your best to make this fun, and accurately communicate to the team your information and perspectives.
3. The Principal will open when everyone has read their roles, written the role on the provided label and put it on.

- Brittany's SDC Teacher
- Brittany's parent(s)
- Brittany's teacher
- Program Specialist
- One of the aides in the morning
- Speech/Language Specialist
- Principal (who serves classes on multiple sites)
- Lead BSP collaborative consultant (can be teacher, psychologist, behavior specialist, or any other member of the student assistance team from this middle school)
- Scorer (Advocate or other visitor who checks and scores each section)
- Remaining members of group: Adjunct role players

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Step Three:

Read **ONLY** your assigned role below. Be ready to play your part. Do your best to make this fun, and accurately communicate to the team your information and perspectives.

The parent(s) will open when everyone has read their roles, written the role on the provided label and put it on

☐ Opening Dialogue, first speaker – Principal Role

You open the role-play by speaking first. Wait until you can tell everyone has read their parts and is ready to begin. Begin the role-play by asking everyone to say their first name, and the role they are playing in this meeting. After that, tell them you are the principal of the school, though the “school” is located throughout the county. Tell them you think Brittany’s problem is her lack of communication skills. **Stop**

☐ Opening Dialogue, second speaker – Parent Role

After the principal speaks, you tell everyone you think that the principal is right about her communication problems. But we still need to get her to be well behaved or her freedom to move about the community will become really restricted. Brittany has many behaviors that are not adaptive. Her attention span is brief and she does not follow staff directions if she wants to do something else. **STOP**

When you hear the teacher say Brittany takes food, tell everyone you have the same problem at home! Sound amazed. Ask the group what the school has done about it so far. **STOP**

☐ Opening dialogue, third speaker – Teacher role

After the parent talks about a short attention span, you agree with the parent: Brittany’s attention span really is short and that is a problem, but you are pleased that she is never aggressive when asked to go somewhere she doesn’t want. Go on to tell everyone that sure is better than hitting and tantruming like some of the students. Brittany simply drops to the floor and refuses to move and that can be a real problem in your class! She likes attention and she likes to eat. **STOP-continued next page**

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Continued:

☐ Opening dialogue, third speaker – Teacher role

When you hear the aide say she likes to eat, start telling everyone that::

Snack is a group activity. All students have the same snack choices and she can have as much as she wants. Staff wants Brittany moved to a separate table because every day she takes others' food and drink. This behavior annoys the other students as well as the staff. **STOP**

☐ Opening dialogue, fourth speaker – Aide role

When you hear the teacher say she likes to eat, you start. Agree with the teacher. But you and the other aides are having a problem because she takes other kids food. **STOP**

When you hear the parent ask what has been done at school about taking food, you supply this information:

The current procedure at school is to remind her not to take food before she goes to snack and give her one warning at snack. After one warning, she is removed from the snack table. She invariably cries and tries to get back to the food. Sometimes she is given another chance, but she usually engages in the same behavior. **Stop**

☐ Opening dialogue, fifth speaker – Behavior consultant, teacher or psychologist in the role of leading this COLLABORATIVE team effort

After the first four speakers, then you start off: Let everyone know now that “my job is to facilitate everyone working together to understand the problem and find a solution. We have about an hour to write down what we all plan to do to help support Brittany in learning new adaptive behaviors. If it takes us longer, we will reschedule to finish on another day.” Offer to record the discussion on the blank BSP. Ask for acknowledgment that this is fine with everyone. Tell them “After we ALL make a decision is made as to what to write, I will check with you on final wording and record it for us. My scorer-assistant will let us know if we are on track, and if not will tell us to try to improve what we are writing.” Then start with Line One: The problem behavior. “So I hear everyone saying that Brittany’s communication is through her behavior, not through her use of words. Let’s discuss what we want to do to teach her better behavior and change the environment to better meet her needs. Which behavior(s) shall we focus on.” etc. Praise people for their contributions lavishly as you go through the plan. **Continued, next page**

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Continued:

- ❑ Opening dialogue, fifth speaker – Behavior consultant, teacher or psychologist in the role of leading this COLLABORATIVE team effort

You are modeling collaborative behavioral consulting skills. You may only write while YOU are talking, not while THEY are talking. Play Columbo: "Do I have that right? Now what should we write here again?" Your scorer-assistant will whisper to you to remember to write only what the team has agreed if you forget. You may only write when YOU are speaking, not while others are speaking. Your scorer-assistant will remind you by gesturing a hand with an invisible pencil.)

Scorer - Assistant Role

Your primary duty is to whisper to the behavior consultant to remember to write ONLY if he/she is speaking, not while others are speaking. You cue him/her by gesturing a writing motion with an invisible pencil. He/she knows what that means. After the team determines what they will write for each line, consult your scoring guide. You give your analysis of the points for each response. After lines that must be analyzed together have been written (such as C. linking 5 and 6) stop the group to discuss the score. If you think any response is not a "2" response, suggest rethinking and writing again.

Adjunct Role Players Roles

When you are required to introduce yourself, choose ANY role:

Grandparent, speech language pathologist, district psychologist, school psychology graduate student, ape specialist at the school, one of Brittany's teachers. As the plan is written, play that role. Ask questions whenever you can, ask for more explanation, and above all, express how thrilled you are, praise lavishly!

BRITTANY CASE STUDY HINTS

Step Four - Key Information and Hints:

EVERYONE: Read as you write each BSP section/line and as you role-play plan development:

1. **Behavior:** Target both the taking of food, and the drop behavior. Follow two strands, writing each to a 2 pt. level. Remember to number behaviors and correlate with functions and interventions
5. **Predictors:** When she has food available; when requested to go somewhere (write this to a 2 pt.)
6. **What is in/missing in:** Nothing has been done so far to teach her schedules or a picture exchange system to get her needs met or negotiate; no reinforcers for compliance (high 5s, smiles have occurred yet). Remember, she needs reinforcers IMMEDIATELY after the desired behaviors (write these to a 2 pt. response)
7. **Environmental:** Write changes related to schedules and what happens at snack time and something about what the teacher will say when she complies (interactions)
8. **Function:** Brittany has two-problem behavior, with two functions. What is she gaining or protest/escaping with each of her behaviors?
9. **Alternative replacement behavior:** write something that allows Brittany to protest that is more adaptive than dropping to the floor; write something that allows her to get more snack, without taking others' food. Also include learning pivotal skills: communicating with others through pictures
11. **Reinforcers:** Do not use food. She will not understand contingent access, i.e., "first do XXXX, then you can do XXX" very readily. She loves social attention, smiles, high 5s, etc.
12. **Reactive Strategies:** When she drops, how do you want staff to hand it? When she grabs food, what should staff do?
14. **Communication:** This parent is overwhelmed but still needs and wants to hear about progress. Consider daily two-way reports.